

Testimony for March 3, 5pm for the Appropriations Secondary Education Sub-Committee

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Secondary Education Sub-committee:

My Name is Jodi Vara and I am the President of the Norwich Youth and Family Services Advisory Board. As a member of the board, I have the pleasure of seeing all of the amazing programs that our and other local Youth Service Bureau's offer our families and children. These Programs are now hanging in the balance due to the proposed \$1.3 million dollar cuts to YSB's. These cuts include the entire enhancement grant line item currently in the budget at \$620, 000 and approximately \$700, 000 cut in the cost sharing grant that YSB's receive for being a YSB. In addition, there is a proposal to move the YSB system out of the State Department of Education and into DCF. This is very problematic as the YSB work very closely with the school systems running programs as well as collecting data using school outcomes as a measure of success for these youth.

Our Norwich YSB runs valuable services that cannot be replaced with other agencies. Norwich YSB as well as other YSB's in the state also work collaboratively with other agencies, schools, non-profits, and regional action councils to provide top-notch services to our children such as prevention programs, after school and summer programs that focus children toward successful futures. They provide services to families who are struggling with how to handle the ups and downs of parenting as well as providing grandparents who are raising their grandchildren valuable resources.

YSB's already work with little to no money and now with these proposed cuts they will be forced to work with even less. Many YSB's use the current fund as leverage for funds beyond the basic state grants and without the current funds it will be more difficult to secure those additional funds. With funds programs that provided family strengthening classes, Jail diversion programs, clinical services, programing for pregnant teens and more will be lost. While I know that it is

important to balance the budget, I also know that we need to provide services to our youth. By providing services now, we will decrease the amount of money we spend in the future.

Please reconsider these cuts, our youth deserve better than this.

Thank you,

Jodi M. Vara